



## **Class 10. Forgive as God Forgave You**

### REVIEW OF LAST WEEK

- Matthew 18 refers to a simple five-step process:

- 1 - Overlook Minor Offenses
- 2 - Talk in Private
- 3 - Take One or Two Others Along
- 4 - Tell it to the Ecclesia
- 5 - Treat Them as a Nonbeliever

- Disfellowship is effectively the Ecclesia saying,

- You are doing something that the ENTIRE ECCLESIA believes the Bible disagrees with, and if you want to continue to enjoy the benefits of our fellowship, then you must change

- This only works if:

- 1) Our Fellowship has “benefits”
- 2) They have been enjoying the benefits of our Fellowship
- 3) The Members of our Ecclesia all agree to DENY that person the benefits of our Fellowship

### THIS WEEK

- **Colossians 3:13**

- Forgive, as the Lord forgave you...

- A great verse to sum up the Christian Life!

- We have ALL been forgiven a TREMENDOUS amount

- Therefore, we should all be tremendously forgiving
- *Why, then, is it so hard to forgive someone???*
- The simple fact is that it is impossible to truly forgive someone with your own strength... Especially if they have hurt you or betrayed your trust
- You can try not to think about what they did, or bury your feelings deep inside, but unless your heart is changed by God, the memories and feelings will still be lurking in the background - Poisoning your thoughts and preventing you from rebuilding a relationship with that person
- To truly forgive, you have to pray to ask God to change your heart about that person
- To understand what Forgiveness is, it's helpful to first talk about what it is NOT:
  - Forgiveness is NOT a Feeling, it's an act of Will
  - It's a series of decisions you make, the first of which is to ask God to change your heart
    - Forgiveness is NOT Forgetting, it is a Decision
    - It's an active process involving a conscious choice to stop thinking about what has happened to you
      - Forgiveness is NOT Excusing, it is the Opposite
  - The very fact that Forgiveness was needed and was given indicates that someone did something un-excusable
  - Forgiveness is a Decision
  - To Forgive someone is to release them from their liability to suffer punishment
  - Think of it as a Debt
    - When someone sins against you they create a Debt
    - You can either take payments on the debt, or make payments
      - You take payments by dwelling on it, by being cold to them, by giving up on the relationship, by gossiping about them, by lashing out or seeking revenge
    - OR... You can make payments on the Debt and release them from the penalty

- Sometimes you can pay this off in one payment, sometimes it takes years... Fighting painful memories, saying nice things when you really don't want to, tearing down walls instead of building them up...

- **Isaiah 59:2**

- When we are forgiven by God, he releases us from the penalty of being separated from him

- **Psalms 103:12**

- Through forgiveness God tears down the walls that we have built, and opens the way for a renewed relationship

- When we forgive, we must do the same thing - Release the person, tear down the walls that the sin created, and concentrate on rebuilding a healthy relationship

- WHEN should you Forgive?

- Ideally, repentance should precede forgiveness

- **Luke 17:3**

- However, minor offenses should be overlooked and put away even if the offender hasn't acknowledged them

- When something is too serious to overlook, and the offender has not yet repented... Try this:

- First, have an ATTITUDE of Forgiveness

- Then, you actually GRANT Forgiveness

- You pray for them, and stand ready to accept them as soon as they repent

- Think of the Prodigal's Father!

- Once they actually do repent, and you forgive them, then don't bring it up again to use it against that person

- You haven't really forgiven them if you use it to support your argument against them two years from now

- Remember, that Forgiveness doesn't release them from the consequences of their sin  
- Numbers 14:20-23

- God forgave the Israelites for rebelling, but he still didn't let them enter the Promised Land

- 2nd Samuel 12-13

- God forgave David for his sin with Uriah, but he still had to live with the consequences of his child dying

- Don't think that it is always helpful to remove the consequences of their actions - They may never learn

- Proverbs 19:19

- You often should make them "pay the consequences", while all the while forgiving them, loving them, and walking with them through it

- If you are feeling Unforgiving, here is some help:

#### 1) Confirm Repentance

- If you are having a difficult time forgiving someone, you may need to let them know

- They may have had an insufficient repentance, or you may just need some more time to get over the hurt

#### 2) Renounce Sinful Expectations

- We sometimes withhold our forgiveness because we unconsciously want to the "earn" or "deserve" it first

- That is an unrealistic expectation!

- We are ALL Sinners!

- **Romans 5:8**

- While we were yet sinners, God forgave us

- We can't wait for them to be perfect before we forgive them

#### 3) Assess your Contributions to the Problem

- Even if you didn't start it, your sinful words and actions may have aggravated the situation

- Remembering your own faults makes it easier to forgive others

#### 4) Recognize that God is Working for Good

- When someone wronged you, it was all part of God's Plan to grow you spiritually
- Focus on what you have to learn and let them go

#### 5) Remember God's Forgiveness

- Focus on how much God has forgiven you
- Think about the Unmerciful Servant in Matt 18:21-25
- Don't take God's forgiveness for granted, and then withhold it from your Brother

#### 6) Draw on God's Strength

- You can't do this alone!
- You have to pray and ask God to help you through this

### RECONCILIATION

- Being Reconciled doesn't mean that the other person is going to be your best friend
- It only means that your relationship is at LEAST as good as it was before the offense
- You have to give them the opportunity to demonstrate repentance - This may take a while, and require patience
- (Think of Charlie Brown and Lucy and the Football)
- Unless a deliberate effort is made to restore and improve a relationship, it will generally deteriorate
- You can help this by pursuing reconciliation on three levels:

#### 1) In Thought

- Actually THINK about the person differently
- You've got a mental picture of how you think about that no good, low down, stealing, stupid jerk...
- Change your thoughts, and think of them repenting, saying they were sorry, and asking for forgiveness

- **Philippians 4:8**

2) In Word

- **Luke 6:27-28**

- Don't just stop saying mean things, actually start saying kind things!

- Replace your negativity with positive words

- **2nd Corinthians 2:7**

3) In Deed

- If you really want to be reconciled, then act that way

- Behave like you love someone, and eventually you will

- Loving actions do more than just change your feelings about someone, they communicate clearly that you are trying to reconcile and build a new relationship